



## **Downtown Revitalization Strategies – 1990s and Beyond**

Following earlier efforts in the 1970s, a renewed Downtown Renton redevelopment effort was launched in 1996 when the City relocated existing downtown car dealerships to the new Automall, acquiring the land in Downtown as a catalyst for new residential, retail, transit and open spaces. Private investment followed in residential development and as part of a public-private partnership to build the Renton IKEA Performing Arts Center. Downtown Renton remains a high priority for the City, as cited in the 2009-2014 Business plan goals: “promote citywide economic development,” and a specific reference to “continue redevelopment efforts Downtown.”

### ***The City has invested in and continues to foster active community development Downtown through:***

- Dedicated City staffing
- Intensive business outreach and retention support, including monthly newsletter, “Downtown News,” and active involvement in multiple Downtown-related committees
- Real estate and capital investments – Piazza, Transit Center, Municipal Garage, Pavilion/Events Center, banners, public art, wayfinding initiative
- Efforts to increase pedestrian and visitor traffic through year-round events and a successful Farmers Market, which brings approximately 3,500 visitors to the Piazza every Tuesday from June through September
- Fostering significant quality, mixed use multi-family housing developments using incentives such as the Multi-Family Property Tax Exemption at Merrill Gardens at Renton Centre (155 units), 95 Burnett Apartments (106 apartments), Chateau de Ville (50 condos), Liberty Square (92 affordable apartments), 2<sup>nd</sup> & Main (planned – approx. 100 units)

### ***Some of the specific current efforts include:***

- Supporting and aggressively promoting the Small Business Development Center for confidential, free business advisor services
- Outreach to property owners to discuss plans and to encourage investments to enhance storefronts
- Partnering with the Chamber to host mini-workshops to strengthen business skills
- Recruiting retail businesses to locate in Downtown
- Leveraging private investment to increase public art in Downtown
- Increasing the number and draw of events to increase visibility of Downtown, and effectively leveraging media coverage of these events

For more information about Downtown and other potential resources and sources of funding (for preservation, arts housing/facilities, or affordable housing projects), contact Jennifer Davis Hayes, Community Development Project Manager, 425-430-6589 or [jdavishayes@rentonwa.gov](mailto:jdavishayes@rentonwa.gov).

## **Tools to Improve Downtown Renton**

**The Small Business Development Center** provides local small and medium-sized businesses with professional, no-fee, confidential, one to one counseling to help companies thrive and grow. The Advisor can assist with bank loan applications, marketing strategies, improving profit, financial management and forecasting, employee strategies or buying/selling a business. The City of Renton, Renton Chamber of Commerce, Renton Technical College, First Savings Northwest Bank, and U.S. Bank support this free service. For more information, contact [SBDC-Renton@rtc.edu](mailto:SBDC-Renton@rtc.edu), 425-235-7819, or visit [www.wsbdc.org](http://www.wsbdc.org)

The **Small Business Administration 504 Loan Program** can assist businesses buy their buildings and control the impact of rent expenses. Renton's Northwest Business Development Association, a local non-profit economic development company, partners with banks to help local businesses purchase, or construct, their owner-occupied buildings. Financing is through a combination of a term loan from a bank and an SBA 504 loan. With as little as a 10% down payment, a business can own its building and enjoy a low 20-year fixed rate. Contact Elizabeth Stevens at Northwest Business Development Association, 206-799-9639 or [estevens@nwbusiness.org](mailto:estevens@nwbusiness.org) to find out more information about the SBA 504 loan program.

### **Storefronts That Sell**

Studies show that customers make a decision about a store within 7 seconds. That is precious little time to get and keep their attention in this world – an even more important reason that storefronts need to be well maintained. Here are some suggestions from the National Main Street program to improve the storefront and retail window display area to capture positive attention.

#### **Storefronts:**

- Add planters or hanging baskets enhance color. Entrance ways including sidewalks should be free of clutter.
- Windows and storefronts should be well lit, including any signage in the window or façade.
- Retail facades should be consistent with the neighbor's façade – although colors may differ to differentiate retail spaces.
- Maintain or restore to the building's original proportions (including bulkhead, transom, and sign band.)

#### **Signage:**

- Businesses should coordinate sign colors with storefront colors, interior colors, and other marketing materials.
- Wall signs should be designed and hung to take advantage of any architectural features above the display window.

#### **Display Windows:**

- Avoid too many signs. Clutter on the window distracts from the message businesses are trying to present.
- Displays should be changed often (monthly), have a theme (i.e. color, product, or holiday), should allow customers to see through to the store interior, and be displayed close to the window to overcome reflection.